

# Sunday School

## THE POWER OF THE TONGUE.

June 6, 1909. James 3: 1-12.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—"Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles."—Prov. 21:23.

### SHORTER CATECHISM.

Q. 58. What is required in the fourth commandment?

A. The fourth commandment requireth the keeping holy to God such set times as He hath appointed in His word; expressly one whole day in seven, to be a holy Sabbath to Himself.

### DAILY HOME READINGS.

M.—Jas. 3: 1-12.

T.—Jer. 9: 1-8.

W.—Zech. 8: 9-17.

Th.—Ps. 52.

F.—Ps. 12.

S.—Prov. 10: 11-22.

S.—Ps. 34: 11-18.

### TOPICAL OUTLINE.

#### The Danger of an Unbridled Tongue—

In a religious teacher, vs. 1, 2.

Like what? Vs. 3-8.

Contrary to nature, vs. 9-12.

### LESSON COMMENTS.

"My brethren, be not many masters." "Master" is the old word for teacher or Rabbi. The teacher instructs and controls. He is the censor and critic by virtue of his office. There should not be many in any community. The Lord does not equip many for this work. But the position is very pleasant and desirable to men of dead faith. The less we do, the more willing are we to criticise the deeds of others. The teacher's greatest critics are the poorest pupils he has. If the school is composed of slothful and insubordinate pupils, it soon becomes a school composed of teachers. In all ages and among all races the tendency has been for men to be slow to hear and swift to speak. The tongue has belied the life. Men say, and do not. In the early Church, the lack of safeguards in securing fit men for preachers, soon became apparent. The volunteers were too numerous. Too many candidates for the ministry is as great an evil as too few. Conditions now, in this matter, seem to be the reverse of what they were at first. There should not be many teachers, but there should be enough. The modern superintendent of the Sunday School sometimes has trouble securing enough. A living faith is the remedy for both extremes.

"Knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation." Condemnation is greater or less as the condemned have greater or less opportunity and responsibility. A teacher should understand this. He is unfit who does not know and feel it.

"For in many things we offend all." Every one of us, without exception, stumbles in many things. We are all not only fallible, but constantly are doing and saying the wrong things in many ways. Therefore none of us is fit to be teacher. And therefore when it becomes necessary for any of us to take that position we should not do it lightly or carelessly.

"If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man." He is a perfect man who does not slip or stumble in his speech. We all stumble in many things—especially in our words.

"And able also to bridle the whole body." The control of the tongue is the most difficult task we have. If we can do this we can control our emotions and thoughts and actions. We can use the tongue as a bridle to guide our conduct where we will.

"Behold we put bits in the horses' mouths that they may obey us." But we try to control ourselves without bits. Self is no more docile than a horse. We must guide ourselves, and exercise self control. To do this we must have the proper

appliance—the bits. A teacher must always have his bridle on, or he will run away with himself, and do damage in the heat and excitement of the argument.

"Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm." We may be very ponderous and our self importance bulk large, but we can not keep a straight course without the helm. We are turned by our tongues. Even when storms buffet, the ship answers the helm.

"Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things." The bits boast the control of a powerful horse, and the helm, of a great ship. The tongue can boast the control of a human life, and that is a great thing. Of course, the man himself does the self controlling. The steersman directs the ship; but he directs by means of the rudder. So a man directs his conduct by controlling his tongue. The tongue is mightier than all else.

"Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" "A matter" is either "a forest" or "a pile of wood." "And the tongue is a fire." Teaching is a dangerous business. We must not have many teachers for it is intolerable to allow fools to play with fire. They will set the woods afire.

"A world of iniquity. The tongue is the habitat of sin, the region for the breeding of evil, iniquity's world. Error lives in speech, wrong develops by publication. Sin dies of silence.

"So is the tongue among other members." We are so constituted that speech acts on us as fire on matter.

"Setteth on fire the course of nature." "Course" is "wheel." The figure is an ancient scientific conception. It means all nature, all creation. Everything produced in the circle of nature is combustible in that fire which is the tongue. All is destructible by speech. A teacher then should know the power for destruction of his words.

"It is set on fire of hell." The tongue is a torch, harmless till lighted. Hell is whence the fire is derived for destruction.

"Every kind of beasts is tamed of mankind." The dominion given to man over the beast extends to all sorts, and can be exercised now as in the past.

"But the tongue can no man tame." No man can tame his own tongue; therefore we all offend in many things. No man can tame his neighbor's tongue. Speech is more impossible to control than beast or fowl or fish. A teacher should know he is dealing with a wild thing when he essays to wag his tongue. "An unruly evil, full of deadly poison." Some of us think what we say is of little moment. There is too much talk.

"Therewith bless we God, even the Father, and therewith curse we men." And yet men are "made in the similitude of God." To bless one and curse the other is for a fountain to send out of the same aperture sweet water and bitter. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be." They can not be so, for no fountain can both yield salt water and fresh. Blessing God and cursing men is impossible. Insincerity characterizes one or the other. Analyzed, both the blessing and cursing will be found to be the same thing.

The tongue is a bridle or a rudder to guide with, a fire for destruction, an untamed beast, but as fig tree or vine, it bears its fruit proper to its nature. The tongue of a good man will bless and the tongue of a bad man will curse. His is a dead and worthless faith, whose faith is not heard in his conversation as well as seen in his walk.

H. D. Hedleston.

Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance; it is laying hold of his highest willingness.—Trench.

Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year; no man has learned anything rightly, until he knows that every day is doomsday.—Emerson.